



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

March 13, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall
Chair, House Health Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill 1251 - Health Facilities and Health Insurance - Palliative Care - Required Access and Coverage (Edna G. Neal Palliative Care Act) - Letter of Concern

Dear Chair Bagnall and Committee members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of concern for House Bill (HB) 1251 - Health Facilities and Health Insurance - Palliative Care - Required Access and Coverage (Edna G. Neal Palliative Care Act).

The Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ) is the designated State survey agency on behalf of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Through State and federal authority, OHCQ conducts surveys to determine compliance with State licensure and/or federal certification regulations. As the licensing and compliance oversight agency for Maryland's 1,600 assisted living facilities; 220 nursing homes; 26 general hospice programs and 13 hospice houses; and 61 hospitals, OHCQ anticipates it would be responsible for developing, implementing, and enforcing regulations and technical standards.

To ensure the regulations adopted in accordance with HB 1251 are clinically sound, enforceable, and consistent with accepted palliative care practice, OHCQ would require a physician consultant at an estimated cost of \$236,894. The consultant would be responsible for program design, development of clinical criteria, and regulatory drafting, as OHCQ does not currently have the specialized palliative care expertise to support this work. In addition, HB 1251 would create ongoing oversight and enforcement responsibilities across the 1,920 facility settings covered by the bill. These activities would include complaint intake and triage, investigation and onsite verification, review of corrective actions, and follow-up monitoring. OHCQ estimates these enforcement and oversight activities would require three additional nurse surveyors at each level of care (hospital, assisted living facilities, and nursing home) at an estimated FY 2027 cost of \$250,546.

OHCQ recognizes the importance of palliative care, particularly in light of the complexity of care in the community and Maryland's aging population. However, HB 1251 would require OHCQ to operationalize a new program, which it cannot do with existing resources and current

staff expertise. For this reason, the Department respectfully offers its letter of concern with HB 1251.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Lynch, Director of Governmental Affairs at [Meghan.Lynch@maryland.gov](mailto: Meghan.Lynch@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Meena Seshamani', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D
Secretary of Health